

# 'GO ON, SUCKERS, MAKE OUR DAY'

## ARMS TRADE CELEBRATES A MASSIVE HIKE IN PROFITS

Recent figures have revealed, to the surprise of very few, that the 'war on terrorism' is proving immensely profitable for the legal purveyors of infinitely varied atrocity that constitute the arms trade. Their bloated coffers have been further swollen by a 6% rise in world military spending for 2002 – double that of the previous year. The rise takes the total for global military spending to a staggering \$794 billion.

To no one's surprise again, the US makes up an equally staggering 43% of that total, and 75% of the rise. And the plan is to spend more. The US is looking to increase arms procurement by 32% between now and 2007, taking its spending on arms from the current total of \$48 billion up to \$78 billion.

Although the Western European members of NATO spent 3% less over the last three years – presumably because they intend to rely on the military might of the United States – Russia is set to increase its defence budget by 7.8% this year, China's military spending rose by 18% in 2002 and India's arms imports rose by 72% in the same year.

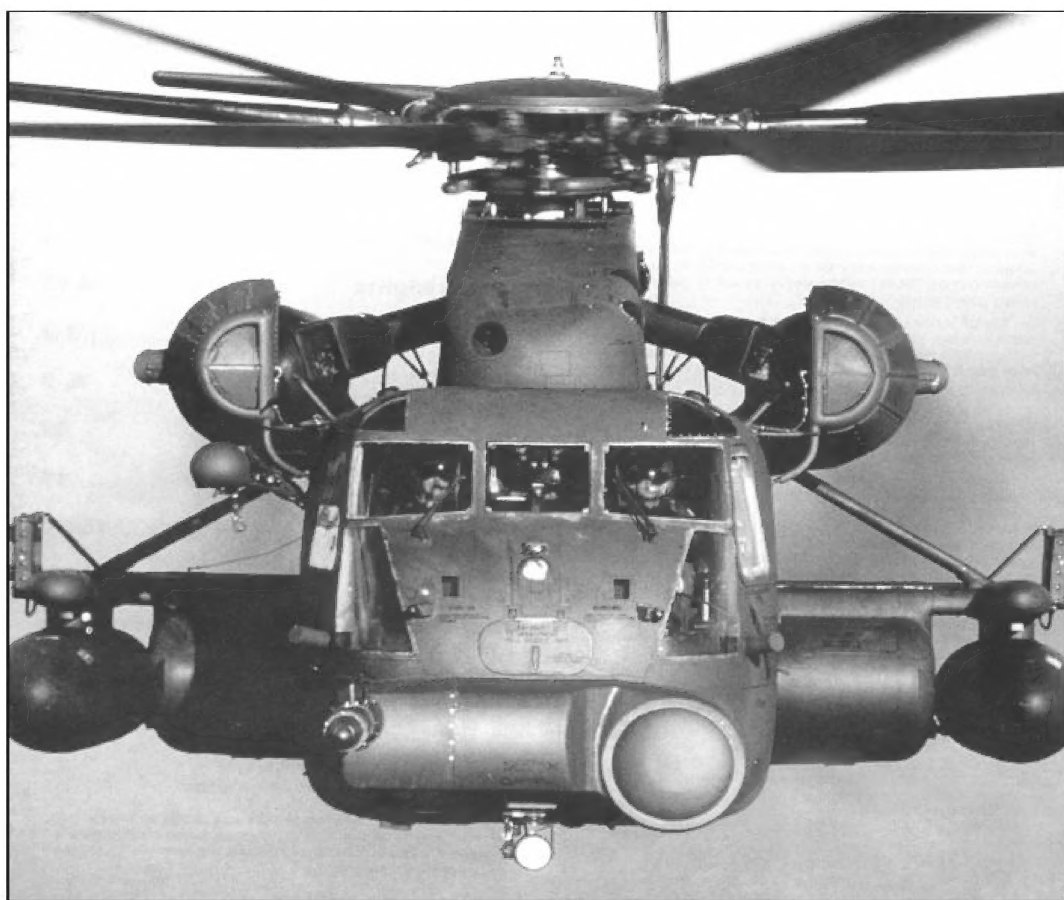
All other things being equal, it's likely that the last three will be formidable economic powers by the second third of this century, which will see them encroaching on US-EU profits. With this sharpened competition for markets will come the likelihood of yet further crises in capitalism, an increased risk of war and further increases in 'defence' spending. The arms trade will need to get some bigger coffers, it seems, for death is their business, and business is good.

• Arms dealers will be junketing in London from 9-12 September this year, when the Borough of Newham hosts Defence Systems Equipment International (DSEI) – one of the world's largest trade fairs for arms.

Delegates from all over the world will be there, browsing the wars – sorry, wares – on offer and choosing from any number of highly innovative variations on the basic theme of profitable lethality. Guns, bombs, aircraft, mines, tanks: if it kills or maims and some pin-striped shyster with a corpse-filled

cesspit for a conscience can turn a profit from it, you can be sure it will be there.

But so will



thousands of uninvited guests. Protesters from all over the UK, Europe and beyond will be doing all they can to disrupt the event and send as clear a message as possible to those that traffic in bloodshed that they're not wanted here – or anywhere else for that matter. The stated aim is to shut the event down and damage the industry by whatever means necessary.

For more information and to find out how to get involved, visit [www.dsei.org](http://www.dsei.org) or write to Destroy DSEI, Box 8, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX. Call them on 07887 620379 or mail [dsei\\_da@london.com](mailto:dsei_da@london.com)

## KABUL, BAGHDAD, NOW TEHRAN

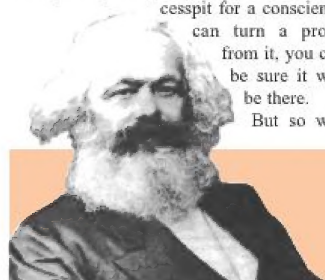
The blood has barely dried in the Iraqi sand, and the United States and Britain have already moved on to their next target. Recycling the familiar rhetoric about weapons of mass destruction and 'regime change', George Bush has trained his sights on Tehran.

Washington says Iran is secretly producing nuclear weapons. The EU, though not wholly endorsing Bush's claim, has fallen into line and is joining the US and Britain in demanding a tougher, more intrusive inspection programme to corroborate Iranian claims that its nuclear development is

intended solely for the generation of electricity. Failure to comply on Iran's part would lead to trade sanctions.

Michael Leedon from the American Enterprise Institute, a think-tank sharing a number of its members with the infamous Project for a New American Century (see page 4), says "if we're serious about winning the war against the terror masters, the Tehran regime must fall." British intelligence and special forces have been put on alert for a possible war in the next year.

Anton Pawluk



## CHARLIE RIDES AGAIN

HOW THE SWP HOBBLED THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT – PAGE 3



## Local news

### Justice for Ray Gilbert

A public meeting was held in Liverpool on 29th May to step up the campaign for the release of wrongly imprisoned black Liverpudlian Ray Gilbert. Of the people present, almost all were priests, peace activists or Quakers. 'Radicals', apparently, aren't doing prisoner support work, at least, it seems, not in Liverpool.

Investigative journalist Eamonn O'Neil, with access both to television and the print media, is developing a strong interest in the case. The religious press is also increasingly involved. There are undoubtedly enough flaws in Ray's conviction to obtain positive results, and his supporters need as many people as possible to lobby the Home Office, MPs and the mainstream media. It's all very non-anarchist, alas, but there isn't any other viable approach at present.

Anybody wanting further information should contact me, Frankie Dee, via the Anarchist Federation or Freedom, address as above. Over 22 years inside for a crime you didn't commit is long enough.

F.D.

### Everton fan's got the blues

I was born in a military hospital in that cauldron of western colonial capitalism, Hong Kong. Now I find part of that world coming back to haunt me in the shape of mobile phone company, Kejian, who are sponsoring my beloved Everton Football Club, the one and only remaining real cultural tie I have with my class, being a vegan green anarchist with a penchant for jazz who refuses to have a skinhead haircut (very much in vogue here in Liverpool).

Being a member of the Free Tibet

Campaign I was horrified to read that, as a state-communist [sic] company, part of Kejian's profits will go straight into the coffers of the Chinese state. So how could I possibly condone this by spending money to enter Goodison Park? (Albeit on my usual junior ticket - I'm very youthful-looking and blessed with the Scouse tendency to pull a fast one where possible.) I decided to mount a one-man campaign - surprisingly there aren't many would-be Tibetan freedom fighters in the Gladwys Street.

So far I've had an article about it in Everton's well-known and widely-read fanzine, *When Skies are Grey* (the WSAF website saw a number of supportive emails after the article appeared). I've sent a package of information to the club, including newsletters and periodicals from the Free Tibet Campaign. I've braved a leafletting foray at the home game against the unmentionables from across Stanley Park.

Any comrades who share my love for the Blues can get involved in any way they see fit or useful. Everton haven't exactly blazed a trail of glory in recent years, especially since the heady days of the 1980s, having narrowly escaped relegation on several nail-biting occasions. So it burns that they're now a force to be reckoned with - a brilliant manager in David Moyes and Wayne Rooney a future best player in the world - just at the time I'm boycotting every match. Ah well, never mind, aye.

I'm still a footy fan, albeit a rather principled and isolated one. But over a million people slaughtered, a whole country's culture under serious threat, mass internment and torture - all of these should lead any half-decent person to boycott the club too. Tibet's not an anarchy, but it's a peaceful and still largely primitive (in the most respectful and kudos-giving sense of

the word) country, with little or no history of oppressing others. The Tibetan people deserve our support and, as anarchists, socialists, communists or whatever, if we're humanitarians we're obliged to give it. Up the blues! Down the reds!

Paul Newton

Anybody who wants to know more about Paul's campaign can contact him c/o Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

### Posties take wildcat action

Around 300 postal workers walked out of their Guildford depot early on 17th June after bosses told them the distribution centre would shut in October. After a 20-hour strike, senior managers apologised and claimed it was all a misunderstanding.

### New anarcho groups

London anarchists are setting up a class struggle anarchist group, the North East London Anarchist Alliance. Anyone who's interested and who lives in south Essex, Havering, Barking and Dagenham or Redbridge can contact them c/o the Anarchist Federation, Box 2, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX or by emailing [AnarchistFederation@bigfoot.com](mailto:AnarchistFederation@bigfoot.com)

The Anarchist Federation are also trying to set up a group in Brighton. Anyone who's interested should contact the AF at the same address.

Young anarchists in Worthing have set up their own group, Worthing Anarchist Youth. They can be contacted by email at [worthinganarchistyouth@hotmail.com](mailto:worthinganarchistyouth@hotmail.com) or by writing via the town's rather excellent freesheet, the *Pork-Bolter*, PO Box 4144, Worthing BN14 7NZ

### Campaign needs help

Anti-vivisection campaigners Uncaged are holding a London-wide street collection on 19th July and they need volunteers to help out. Call 0114 272 2220 or mail [max@uncaged.co.uk](mailto:max@uncaged.co.uk)

### Opinions please

A few people in Lancashire, including members of Lancashire Solidarity Federation and the Lancaster Anarchist Group, are considering organising an event in Lancaster around May-June next year. This would be a combination of bookfair, workshops, discussion meetings (with speakers from outside the anarchist movement) and social events. We see this happening over a weekend, starting on a Friday night.

We want this to be as wide-ranging as possible, and it will be open to all anarchists and sympathisers to get involved. We also want it to be an event that will attract non-anarchists so it's not just the same people talking to each other. We need to reach out beyond the anarchist ghetto.

But we want to gauge interest before we go ahead with any definite arrangements. We've thought about holding the event around the Mayday weekend, but we realise that others may be planning events of their own. Other possible dates would be in early June 2004.

We want reactions to the idea to see if it's worth going ahead and to make sure that, if we do, it doesn't clash with any other events. So if any readers are interested, please could they contact us by the first weekend in August with their thoughts, ideas and criticisms.

Northern Anarchist

Contact [anarchyupnorth@boltonblue.com](mailto:anarchyupnorth@boltonblue.com) or c/o Lancashire SF, PO Box 29, Preston PR1 8XF

## Forthcoming events

### BRIGHTON

**Sunday 13th July** Brighton Peace Festival at Hove lawns. For more info tel 01273 241625 or email [peacemessage@harmonyculture.com](mailto:peacemessage@harmonyculture.com)

### CARDIFF

**Wednesday 2nd July** Meeting in support of Disarm DSEi, 6pm at Cathays Community Centre. This is a general meeting to establish local working groups

### COULPORT

**Saturday 2nd to Friday 15th August** Trident Ploughshares disarmament camp at Coulport, Scotland. See [www.tridentploughshares.org](http://www.tridentploughshares.org) or call 0845 4588 366.

### DERBYSHIRE

**Sunday 24th August** Red Rambles walk, meet 11am at Hurt Arms pub car park, Ambergate, for five mile walk and picnic through mixed deciduous woodland.

### GLOUCESTERSHIRE

**Friday 4th July** Party for Independence from America plus the Gatecrashers Stroll. Meet up in the main car park at the top of the main street in Fairford town to stroll along to the main entrance of USAF Fairford, and along southern perimeter. See [www.fairfordpeacewatch.com](http://www.fairfordpeacewatch.com)

### GUILDFORD

**Friday 20th July** Ambient Green Picnic in Shalford Park with four music stages powered by ecologically-sound energy, plus stalls, workshops, kids stuff, all for free. See [www.surreywap.co.uk/Ambientgreen/Ambienthome.htm](http://www.surreywap.co.uk/Ambientgreen/Ambienthome.htm)

### LEICESTER

**Tuesday 1st July** Leicester Anarchist Federation meeting upstairs at Ale Wagon pub, Charles Street. See [http://www.geocities.com/leicester\\_af/org.html](http://www.geocities.com/leicester_af/org.html)

### LONDON

**Thursday 26th June to Saturday 5th July** Fake Productions present 'No, It Was You' at the Arcola Theatre, 27 Arcola Street, E8, tel 020 7503 1646. See [www.fakeproductions.com](http://www.fakeproductions.com)

**Friday 27th June** Benefit concert for peace in Kurdistan and Campaign Against Criminalising Communities at the Kufa Gallery, 26 Westbourne Grove, W2 from 8pm. See [www.cace.org.uk](http://www.cace.org.uk)

**Saturday 28th June** A day of discussion on the war from 11am to 5pm at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street (nearest tube Whitechapel or Aldgate East). Contact [nowar\\_buttheclaw@yahoo.com](mailto:nowar_buttheclaw@yahoo.com)

**Sunday 29th June** Destroy DSEi planning meeting, 2pm at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel. Contact [dsei\\_da@london.com](mailto:dsei_da@london.com) or 07887 620379 or at PO Box 8, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

**Tuesday 1st July** Stop DSEi open meeting, 7.30pm at LARC, 62 Fieldgate Street, Whitechapel. See [www.dsei.org](http://www.dsei.org) or contact 07866 723216 or [stopdseinow@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:stopdseinow@yahoo.co.uk)

**Thursday 31st July** The Situationist International and After exhibition at The Aquarium Gallery, 10 Woburn Walk, WC1. See [www.vortexbooks.com](http://www.vortexbooks.com)

### MANCHESTER

**Wednesday 2nd July** Manchester SolFed meeting at the Hare and Hounds, Shude Hill, near the Amdale Centre, at 8.30pm. Topic will be 'Education and the Working Class'. For more info see

[www.manchestersf.org.uk](http://www.manchestersf.org.uk) or call 07984 675281

**Thursday 3rd July** Public meeting on DSEi, 7pm at Friends Meeting House. All welcome

**Tuesday 5th July** Manchester Discussion Group meet at the Hare and Hounds, Shude Hill, near the Amdale Centre at 8pm (also future meeting date on 19th August)

### NEWCASTLE

**Tuesday 1st July** Why Don't You is a new gathering of people who want to take direct action to stop injustice in creative, fun and effective ways. Each fortnight we will see video footage of recent direct action from around the world at the Side Cinema on Newcastle's Quayside at 7.30pm. For info see [www.sidecinema.com/whydonyou.htm](http://www.sidecinema.com/whydonyou.htm) (future date on 15th July)

### OXFORD

**Saturday 28th June** Demonstration outside Campsfield Refugee Detention Centre, 12 noon at the main gates, Langford Lane, Kidlington, near Oxford (buses from Oxford city centre). This is a regular event on the last Saturday of every month. See [www.closecampsfield.org.uk](http://www.closecampsfield.org.uk)

### SOMERSET

**30th July to 3rd August** Big Green Gathering on a new site near Cheddar, Mendip Hills. For more info see [www.big-green-gathering.com](http://www.big-green-gathering.com) or call 01458 834629

### WORTHING

**Tuesday 1st July** Worthing Eco-Action meeting, 7.45pm at the Downview pub opposite West Worthing station

**Monday 7th July** Save Titnore Woods, protest outside pre-inquiry meeting at the Pavilion Theatre, Worthing pier, at 2pm. For more info see [www.protectourwoodland.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.protectourwoodland.fsnet.co.uk)

**Tuesday 8th July** Worthing Against War, 7.45pm upstairs at Downview pub opposite West Worthing station. Topic is North Korea

### YORKSHIRE

**Friday 4th July** Independence from America Day, demo at Menwith Hill spy base in North Yorkshire from 12 noon to 4pm. See [www.caab.org.uk](http://www.caab.org.uk) or call 01943 466405

**Saturday 19th July** NAN Summer Conference from 10.30am to 5pm at Salem Centre, Salem Street, Hebden Bridge. Contact Harry on 01422 842558 for more details

**Saturday 2nd August** Radical Bookfair and Film festival at 1 in 12 Club, Albion Street, Bradford. See [www.lin12.com](http://www.lin12.com)

**13th to 17th August** Earth First! Summer Gathering somewhere in Yorkshire. Contact [summergathering@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:summergathering@yahoo.co.uk)

### AUTONOMISTA TOUR

See [www.autonomista.org](http://www.autonomista.org) for more information about the tour of this Argentinian show. For more venue details see [www.londonarc.org](http://www.londonarc.org) or call 020 7377 9088.

**1st July** Alexander Thompson Hotel, 320 Argyle Street, Glasgow, 7.30pm; **2nd July** Forest art space/café, Westport, Edinburgh; **3rd July** CWU, 15 Brunswick Street, Edinburgh, 7.30pm; **5th July** Lancaster Gregson Centre, Moor Lane, Lancaster, 8.30pm; **7th July** 1 in 12 Club, Bradford; **8th July** 21-23 Albion Street, Leeds; **10th July** Liverpool; **11th July** Cardiff



# Another kiss of death from the SWP

The story of how the STWC helped, not hindered, Britain's war effort

Anarchists as well as anarchist tactics and principles have been at the heart of recent social movements and protests. Anarchist-inspired direct action, affinity groups and consensus decision-making, eschewing the need for 'leaders' and committees to make decisions on behalf of anyone, have been visible wherever there's been resistance and dissent.

Anarchism has been seen in action, over and over again – through the teargas of Evian at the start of June, confronting the ranks of military police in Genoa in 2001, on the streets of Seattle in 1999, in tree houses at the Newbury by-pass, in the defence of sacked Liverpool dockers, in the protests of landless peasants in Brazil and India, in the jungles of Mexico. It's revitalised and regenerated anti-capitalist protests around the world. Whether the participants have regarded themselves as anarchist or not, libertarian principles have been the guiding light for much modern campaigning.

Much, that is, but not all. Unfortunately, anarchist principles have been well and truly missing from most of the organised anti-war movement in Britain over the last couple of years. And significantly, despite massive and unprecedented opposition to the attack on Iraq, the Stop the War Coalition (STWC) was unable to do anything effective to stop Britain's support for it. The STWC was a failure despite the hard work, dedication and effort of many of the activists involved in it.

This failure arose, partly because of a misunderstanding of the role and powers of the state, and partly because of the coalition's approach to tactics and organisation, the direction of which became increasingly dominated by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). In fact, towards the end of the war the STWC came to seem nothing more than a Trotskyist front organisation, another campaign in a spider's web that includes the Anti-Nazi League and Globalise Resistance, and at the heart of which sits the SWP itself,



Fuck the S\*P – just wearing the gear don't make you radical

ready to pounce on any unwary protester who strays in its direction.

The decision of American and British bosses to attack Iraq, despite any political or moral mandate, perfectly illustrates the façade that is liberal democracy. The state, liberals argue, represents the wishes of the majority of the people. But before the war nearly three quarters of the population opposed an invasion and literally millions took to the streets in protest. The result? The state went to war anyway, because this was what the bosses of industry and government – the people the state really represents – wanted. In other words, the anarchists are right when they point out that all states, including bourgeois democratic ones (and Marxist ones), are enemies of democracy and freedom and the bringers of war.

What was incredible about the latest anti-war campaign was the way the anti-war movement concentrated its activities on the state and its representatives. It was as if none of the lessons of the past had been learned. Lobbies of parliament, peaceful marches, postcards to the Prime Minister and all the paraphernalia of liberal protest alone were

never going to stop an invasion. The institution of the state is the problem, it isn't and never can be the solution.

Yet the STWC put all its eggs into this one basket, hoping the state could be convinced to change its mind. It failed, miserably. The 'official' British antiwar movement was a throwback to old, authoritarian socialist forms of protest and organisation. An unaccountable national committee took top-down decisions and issued orders to be followed. And many sincere protesters followed. So wedded were they to liberal democracy that many people didn't bat an eyelid when national demonstrations were addressed by members of the very party that was organising Britain's involvement in the war!

In contrast to the fluidity, flexibility and imagination of the anarchist-inspired anti-capitalist movement, Stop the War was static, unexciting, backward-looking and bureaucratic, exactly what you'd expect from a movement run, not by those who opposed the war, but by self-appointed liberal or authoritarian socialist leaders. The result was that an unjustifiable war, lacking support from the majority of British people, still went ahead.

Energy was exhausted in organising and attending march after London march. This meant that numbers inevitably fell every time, giving the impression of legitimisation to Blair's strategy. SWP domination of the anti-war movement, both locally and nationally, reduced the campaign's effectiveness because the party's Central Committee treated it as an opportunity to recruit and to sell papers. That's why the marches were organised – not with a view to stopping the war, but because they were a good means of recruiting. In my neck of the woods, for example, the local anti-war e-list has become a tool for the local SWP to advertise their Marxist Forums as well as Marxism 2003.

Anti-capitalist anti-authoritarian protests like the ones in Evian and Thessaloniki this month haven't brought capitalism to its knees but they've made an impact. Companies that have been targeted, like McDonalds and Gap, have seen their profits drop. Hundreds of thousands of people are prepared to take to the streets and protest, despite increasingly violent police and paramilitary actions.

This leaderless movement is also an international one. It has embraced a range of activities, some traditional, some theatrical, some violent. "One illusion that needs to be dispelled right now is the ritual separation between good and bad protesters" one demonstrator at Evian said. "Whether a sit-in, street party or symbolic assaults on corporate property we all have a common goal".

There'll be more wars in the future, particularly if George W. gets his way. If we're going to stop them we have to abandon the old style of protest, seen so clearly in the actions of the STWC, and the politics of past-their-sell-by-date parties like the SWP. The anti-capitalist movement, with its emphasis on democratic participation, shows the way things should be done. It's an anarchist way of organising for change.

Richard Griffin

## ANARCHISM ON-LINE

### ON WAR AND ANARCHISM

- **War on Iraq**  
([www.struggle.ws/stopthewar.html](http://www.struggle.ws/stopthewar.html))  
Anarchists say no to imperialist war.
- **Anarchism and the fight against imperialism**  
([www.struggle.ws/wsm/imperialism.html](http://www.struggle.ws/wsm/imperialism.html))  
The name says it all.

### ANARCHIST WEBPAGES

- **A-infos: Anarchist News Service**  
([www.ainfos.ca](http://www.ainfos.ca))  
Essential multilingual website for libertarian and class struggle news from across the globe.
- **Anarchists in Britain**  
([www.anarchism.ws/britain.html](http://www.anarchism.ws/britain.html))  
An index of British anarchist resources and contacts on the internet. Includes links to the Solidarity Federation, Anarchist Federation, Class War and other anarchist and libertarian groups in the UK, plus mailing lists and newspapers/magazines.
- **Workers Solidarity Movement**  
([www.struggle.ws/wsm.html](http://www.struggle.ws/wsm.html))  
Excellent website of the Irish anarchist group. Contains copies of their paper, magazine and leaflets, plus reports of their activities. High quality stuff.
- **Mid-Atlantic Infoshop**  
([www.infoshop.org](http://www.infoshop.org))  
An excellent anarchist website – no short description can do it justice. Also has a lively newswire.

### ANARCHIST THEORY

- **Anarchist Archives**  
([dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/archive/home.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/archive/home.html))  
Excellent webpage which contains pamphlets, articles and books by all the famous anarchist writers and activists.
- **An Anarchist FAQ**  
([www.anarchistfaq.org](http://www.anarchistfaq.org))  
Comprehensive overview of anarchism, what anarchists want and do. Includes sections on why anarchists are against the state, capitalism and hierarchy plus the anarchist critiques of capitalism and Marxism.
- **Anarcho-Syndicalism 101**  
([www.anarchosyndicalism.org](http://www.anarchosyndicalism.org))  
This is devoted to building anarcho-syndicalism globally. It's an archive of theoretical and historical articles, images and propaganda.
- **Anarchism Web Site**  
([www.anarchism.ws](http://www.anarchism.ws))  
Excellent website. Includes pages on libertarian groups across the world. Also covers issues like anarchist opposition to war, the Spanish and Russian revolutions, women's liberation, the Zapatistas and globalisation.
- **Zabalaza Books**  
(<http://www.zabalaza.net/zababooks>)  
Excellent resource, packed full of high quality free anarchist reading material in pdf format. Part of the Southern African anarchist site Zabalaza ([www.zabalaza.net](http://www.zabalaza.net)).

When forming a front group, it always helps to have a few prominent members who genuinely believe in what they're doing in order to provide a figleaf to hide the fact that the front's really, er, a front. **Colin Chambers**, of *Sussex Action for Peace*, was the (non-anarchist) figleaf for the Stop the War Coalition. Here he explains why even he finally had to resign.

At the last two meetings of the STWC Steering Committee I attended, I was attacked by the chair, the SWP's John Rees, for being 'divisive' by voicing an opinion he disagreed with. I was no longer prepared to be subjected to these unwarranted personal attacks – attacks which no-one seemed to think were at all out of order – so I resigned.

I was elected to the Steering Committee as a delegate for *Sussex Action for Peace*, a local anti-war group based in Brighton. I attended all the meetings. I was never emailed about these despite frequent requests and assurances that I would be. I was given the wrong time for the last meeting. I got the distinct impression that I was one of the few, if not the only, delegate from a local group outside London attending.

At a meeting on 29th April, John Rees said the coalition needed to "increase its social weight", something that was different from the number of people involved. He said that, while Muslims helped and the support of the *Daily Mirror* helped, trade unions were the key to giving the coalition this 'social weight'.

John is entitled to his view, but I don't agree with it. I kinda thought the point of coalitions was that people from different political viewpoints managed to discuss differences while working together for common aims.

When I spoke I disagreed with John's view, which I believed idealised the labour movement and offered an inaccurate assessment of the forces that have, and will in the future, oppose the warmongers. I also pointed out – a fact well-known to thousands of anti-war activists – that the coalition repeatedly downplayed or ignored demonstrations at RAF Fairford.

Finally I objected to the fact that the STWC website described as 'anti-war' 57 Labour MPs who didn't oppose the government's motion to go to war, but omitted the names of 68 non-Labour MPs who did.

I have no objection to people disagreeing with me. That's democracy. What isn't acceptable is to have a chair who consistently abuses his position to attack me for voicing my opinions by, among other things, calling me 'sectarian' and 'divisive'. Sectarian? – on behalf of whom? Divisive? – I argued with many anti-war activists, who believe the STWC was against direct action, pro-Labour and entirely dominated by the SWP, that they should work with it because we can achieve more together than apart.

But I'll find it pretty hard to do that any more. Congratulations to the SWP for their success against 'divisiveness'.



# Class struggle escalates in France

A report from our comrades of *Le Cercle Social* in Lille about the deepening resistance to state policies.

The movement against the French government's planned pension reforms has been escalating. Hundreds of thousands of workers took part in two general strikes during May, the month the movement started, as well as other massive demonstrations to oppose reforms that will force people to work for longer in order to get their full pension.

On 3rd June in Calais, around 5,000 people marched to the A26 highway where they were brutally attacked by riot police with batons and teargas. On 5th June, the La Rochelle office of the employers' federation, MEDEF, was set on fire and several other offices across France were attacked.

On 6th June, striking workers disrupted train and bus service in Marseille and Paris. Demonstrators cut power lines at the Gare de Lyon railway station in Paris, halting trains for hours. Striking bus workers and their supporters blockaded a bus depot in the

northern suburbs of Paris, armed themselves with baseball bats and fought with riot police. Sanitation workers in Lyon dumped garbage in front of City Hall. Striking teachers also occupied bus depots and train tracks.

Tens of thousands of people marched through Paris on 10th June as the country was hit by a third general strike. Clashes broke out with police in front of the National Assembly while the politicians were discussing the reforms inside.

Striking workers and a contingent of about a hundred anarchists fought back against baton charges, teargas and water cannon attacks by tearing up cobblestones and throwing them at the riot cops. Barricades were built in the streets and set on fire as police drove the demonstrators back. About 350 people escaped into the opera building, only to be attacked again by cops. Sixty people were arrested.

Société Générale economist Olivier Gasnier commented on the day's events by saying, "the radicalisation of the strikes, the images of violence like those seen on

Tuesday evening in Paris could disturb consumers' peace of mind." The strikes, he said, would cost the French economy hundreds of millions of euros and frighten away investors.

The same day in Lille workers set fire to the Coventry factory and took packages of detergent to the demonstration downtown where tens of thousands were marching. Strikers threw these at riot police for an hour, giving the filthy pigs a good wash. Police then fired teargas, charged the demonstrators and beat some of them with batons.

Hundreds of dockers, railway workers and fish merchants set up blockades at the port in Boulogne sur Mer, set them on fire and defended them against riot police tear gas attacks until 4am the next day.

In Nice workers occupied the National Theatre of Nice, produced leaflets explaining their action and used the space to hold meetings concerning the social struggle. More demonstrations also took place in Marseille, Rouen and Nantes.

On 11th June, 200 people occupied the

Town Hall in Toulouse and closed the doors to the police. The next day, the National Opera of Lyon was occupied by 200 people and the space was used to hold assemblies and plan future actions. Another action targeted the Path Cinema in Lyon, forcing it to shut for the day.

In Lille three major highways were blocked by groups of 300 students, workers and unemployed people. A spontaneous demonstration of more than 1,000 people marched through the streets of the city, as people blocked the doors of businesses and government offices with bins and tried to push through police lines.

The office of the Union of the Presidential Majority (UMP), a political party, was trashed as workers dumped garbage, water and detergent inside. Demonstrators chanted "UMP state, police state." Major road blocks were also set up in Toulouse, Avignon, Paris, Bastia, Perpignan, Toulon and Marseille.

Another general strike was held on 19th June. The social war continues as direct action and sabotage spread.

# Iraq: American imperialism unleashed

*Odessa Steps* concludes this three-part analysis of the factors which led to the invasion of Iraq.

## Part three THE GREAT GAME OF POWER

Until US forces stormed Baghdad earlier this year, the official talk in Washington and London was all about bringing 'democratisation' to Iraq. That rhetoric has vanished now but, in a sign of what seems to be a wider confusion in American policy over what to do with the country, it has yet to be replaced by anything else. We're still no nearer to finding out what the Iraqi people can look forward to, now that they've been 'liberated'.

But we can be fairly certain it will be one of three things – a feeble government, riven by sectarian and nationalist rivalries (as in Afghanistan); another secular dictatorship, backed by a US military presence in the region to defend the oil; or an Islamic 'democracy' of varying shades of fundamentalism.

Whatever proves the case, the clear strategy of the United States government has been to overthrow a rival to its own regional power and to obtain strategic military concessions (bases in Iraq and Qatar) that will protect its domination of Middle East oil and cow troublesome countries like Syria and Iran. No lengthy and expensive period of nation-building is likely, just a gadarene rush to obtain lucrative contracts, the 'westernisation' of Iraqi society (a government and legislation open to free market capitalism) and a series of strategic military and political alliances aimed at protecting Israel and the oil.

It was no surprise that the Pentagon demanded four permanent military bases in Iraq as the price of 'liberation'. One will threaten Syria and Jordan, a second Turkey and the Kurds. The others point both south to the Gulf and east to Iran, according to need.

This move follows a well-established pattern in the Middle East. For the last sixty years, the US has followed a deliberate policy of destabilising hostile regimes and promoting coups against nationalist leaders, then inserting military bases into the region either to support the new regimes or to 'protect' neighbouring countries from chaos. Countries such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq and the Lebanon have all found themselves governed

by US puppet regimes, installed by the CIA, their people cowed by the threat of American military force from nearby bases.

## Controlling Europe

A key objective of current American policy is to prevent the rise of any economic or military power to rival US hegemony. The two most obvious rivals are China and a Europe-Russia axis. The war has split Europe politically and allowed the US to insert many new bases into Eastern Europe, hemming in Russia and dividing the continent.

The United States is (or rather was) facing severe economic decline, especially against Europe, both industrially and financially. Now it's in a position to punish or threaten France and Russia with repudiation of the massive debt run up by Iraq's Ba'athist regime over the past several decades. The growing revelations of corruption and close ties to Baghdad are likely to cripple French and Russian oil companies further, making it easy for the US to paint them as being 'unfit' to do business with and leaving them ripe for takeover.

There are currently more than 175 American military installations throughout the world, with many other more-or-less secret agreements for the use of military and civilian bases and airfields when needed. The pattern of these bases – especially those established most recently – tells us a great deal about US perceptions of where its – and capitalism's – strategic interests lie.

There are none in South America, for instance, and no need for them either, when there's 211 bases in Fortress America within easy reach. There are thirteen in Central Asia, Russia's underbelly, established in the last two years, and five in the Balkans. These last serve to throw a ring round Russia and help protect Israel's backdoor, the eastern Mediterranean.

There are seventeen bases in the Gulf, not counting the four permanent bases to be imposed on Iraq, 55 in South Korea alone. Seventy bases control the western Pacific and hem in China. The new bases that are being built – often after secret negotiations with governments currying favour with the world's only mega-power – are as much political as military. As US administration hawk Paul Wolfowitz admitted, "they send a message" – as if one was needed.

They're about strategic positioning for the next war as much America's outer line of defence today. With them come all kinds of commercial inducements and relationships, bribes, the corrupting and coercion of national elites. Nor should we be fooled by the US withdrawal of forces from Saudi Arabia to nearby Qatar. The military balance hasn't changed, but America is showing that it learned the lessons of Lebanon and the Sudan. When extremism is on the rise – as it is in Saudi Arabia – don't expose your forces to kidnap or attack. Get them out so they can strike from a safe distance.

## A new American century?

The Project for a New American Century (PNAC) is a group that's been agitating for a war on Iraq since it was founded in 1997. It was the driving force behind the drafting and passage of the Iraqi Liberation Act and it lobbied furiously against Bill Clinton for not implementing this law by sending troops to Baghdad.

In 2002 PNAC created a new group called The Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. Staffed entirely by PNAC members, the Committee set out to 'educate' Americans via cable news connections about the need for war on Iraq. This group met with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice to discuss the ways and means of this education.

Who is the PNAC? Its members include Vice President Dick Cheney; Lewis Libby, Cheney's top national security assistant; Donald Rumsfeld; Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz; Eliot Abrams, a prominent member of Bush's National Security Council pardoned by Bush Sr. in the Iran/Contra scandal; John Bolton, who serves as Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security in the Bush administration; Richard Perle, former chairman of the powerful Defense Policy Board; Randy Scheunemann, president of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq; Bruce Jackson, Chairman of PNAC, and a former vice-president of weapons manufacturer Lockheed-Martin; and William Kristol, noted conservative writer for magazines owned by Rupert Murdoch.

The Project for the New American Century hopes to establish what it calls a 'Pax Americana' across the globe. Essentially, its

goal is to transform America, the sole remaining superpower, into a planetary empire by force of arms. A report released by PNAC in September 2000, entitled 'Rebuilding America's Defenses', codifies this plan, which requires a massive increase in defence spending and the fighting of several major wars in order to establish American dominance. The first has been achieved in Bush's budget plan, which calls for the exact dollar amount to be spent on defence that was requested by PNAC in 2000 (fancy that).

The Project for a New American Century controls the White House, the Pentagon and Defence Department and through them the armed forces and intelligence communities. It has at its feet a Republican-dominated Congress that will rubber-stamp virtually everything on their wish list. The first step towards the establishment of this Pax Americana was always the removal of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of an American protectorate in Iraq. The purpose of this was both to acquire control of oil to fund the wider project and also to establish a military staging area for the eventual invasion and overthrow of several Middle Eastern regimes.

One of the primary goals is the protection of Israel and the creation of new strategic realities projecting Israeli military power and encircling 'rogue' states like Syria. Soon after the war ended, the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations called for 'regime change' in Iran and Syria through international isolation and sanctions – a 'road map' we've travelled along before, and all too recently. Before the invasion, Tony Blair was arguing that Iraq should be dealt with in the same way as Kosovo had been since 1999. Bush and Blair had been calling for tighter economic sanctions for some years before the war, even as the rest of the world was trying to ease them.

The war against terror merely delayed Britain and the United States from making their move; the infamous dossier on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was written by March 2002 but its publication was delayed until it became clear the international community wasn't going to be rushed into war.

**Next time: anarchist responses to imperialism**



# Sympathetic portrait of socialist writer

This week saw the centenary of George Orwell's birth. To mark the event, on 14th June BBC2 showed an innovative documentary about his life and work called *George Orwell: A Life in Pictures*. To get round the fact that there's no known film of Orwell or recordings of his voice, the BBC recreated key aspects of his life by means of pseudo-authentic documentaries and interviews. An actor voiced Orwell's words to illustrate aspects of his ideas.

So we had a 1930s-style movie-news clip of him on the Aragon front, explaining the way to make a great cup of tea, and a particularly stiff-upper-lipped round table discussion between him and two pacifists (one of whom was the anarchist, Alex Comfort) to allow Orwell's view of the Second World War to be outlined.

This format was an attempt to explain how Orwell came to write *1984*. As he noted himself in a pseudo-interview at the start of the programme, he considered it impossible for anyone to understand why a book was written unless they knew the author's own history.

And the format worked remarkably well at its job. The pseudo-films managed to give a feel, both of time and of Orwell's opinions. They didn't hide his revolutionary politics or his hatred of inequality.

Nor did the programme pull any punches in portraying working class poverty in the 1930s, or of what it was like to be shot in the neck (as Orwell recounted in *Homage to Catalonia*).

*George Orwell: A Life in Pictures* even discussed the Revolution in Spain. Sadly, this bit let the whole programme down. It's simply impossible to understand why Orwell wrote *1984* without explaining the lies put out by the communists at that time.

The programme used real footage of the



Spanish Revolution and of the CNT militia (which it implied, incorrectly, that Orwell had joined). It made it clear that the communists betrayed the revolution and arrested anti-fascists.

But it failed to mention anarchism once, talking instead of a 'workers' state' in Barcelona, 'the unions' going further than anti-fascism in revolution and 'the militias' being hounded by the communists after the

May Days in 1937. All nearly right, but not quite.

More importantly, however, the programme failed to discuss communist lies and the rewriting of history which Orwell experienced first hand as a result of the May Days. This was as important in producing *1984* as the repression Orwell and other revolutionaries suffered at the hands of the communists.

Nor did the programme discuss the egalitarian spirit of the militias, which impressed Orwell so much. Spain gave Orwell a hatred of Stalinism, but it also confirmed the democratic socialism he held to the end of his life.

The producers of *George Orwell: A Life in Pictures* should be congratulated for providing such an innovative and fine tribute to one of England's greatest writers and socialists. They didn't get it totally right, but hopefully they'll have introduced a new generation of readers to the joy which George Orwell's writings and common decency bring.

Iain McKay

Orwell had an ambivalent attitude towards anarchists and anarchism, both of which he knew well from his experience in Spain. *George Orwell at home (and among the anarchists)*, published by Freedom, contains essays on this subject as well as a series of photographs by Vernon Richards. Buy it for the special centenary price of £5, postage free in the UK (add £2 elsewhere). Freedom sells many other books on Orwell and on Spain, including *The May Days* (£5.95, postage free in the UK, add £2 elsewhere) and Orwell's own *Homage to Catalonia* (£7.99, add £1 postage in the UK, £2 elsewhere). A list of other titles is available on request. Send all orders to Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX (all cheques payable to 'Freedom Press' please).

# Coordinating diversity – why we need a hub

There's been a lot of discussion about establishing a co-ordination mechanism for the extra-parliamentary opposition movements – the anarchists, anti-capitalists, progressive non-party organisations and the grassroots left. We think this is an interesting discussion, but what's vital is that it leads to a real network for change. The fine words must be followed by action. It's extremely important to have no preconceptions about the form, purpose, content or political destination of this co-ordination hub. This article is just a set of suggestions to provoke other thoughts and ideas.

We would like to stress that it's the relationships between the hub and its periphery, the networks and their connections, the collective and its participants that we feel are fundamentally important, not the form any network takes. So we don't fetishise the internet, but we do use it as a tool when it's the most effective one to use. Right now it seems to be the way forwards, so we base this article around the electronic media.

The article is also, necessarily, incomplete. We've never believed we've got all the answers, and we hope any discussion we stimulate will produce all kinds of ideas that we've never even dreamt of. Whatever form any hub takes, we'll need to learn far more than any of us know now about acting collectively, organising without hierarchy and accepting difference, as well as the commitment to put these ways of working into practice.

## A hub – what's it for?

There are both positive and negative reasons for having it. There's a widespread fear that an encouraging increase in social activism is in danger of being eaten up by the Leninist left and their front organisations. Anyone with sense is going to react to this by trying to be more effective, more organised and a more visible alternative so that people will choose to express their resistance in more useful ways than through joining a left party.

We recognise that much of the progressive and revolutionary left in the UK, while having many aspects of politics and approach in common, is fragmented and racked with a tedious sectarianism which disrupts and hinders much of our activity. Many groups are also mired in self-referential activist chic and irrelevant dogma. We're all going to be in a better situation if we can find ways to work together, pool resources and share good ideas. Before we can fight back effectively, we need to stop fighting each other. This doesn't mean we all have to agree on everything. Unity isn't the answer to this question. But it does mean we have to respect difference and value diversity. The hub would be a mechanism for achieving this.

Again, there are different purposes for having a hub, internal and external. Internally, it could be a tool to co-ordinate our activity, to organise collectively and horizontally and to allow us to work together in our different ways. It must be democratic and transparent: we're not in the business of building

a(nother) vanguard. Externally, the hub could be an instrument to carry ideas to people in our streets and workplaces, showing that the revolutionary organisations of tomorrow can be started today.

It could be a path for communication from the streets into the movement, so that we're always learning from the struggles of others. It could provide an access point for ideas that has resonance with those everyday struggles, and which are backed up by a multitude of organisations and individuals as well as providing access into the resistance movement for people currently on its fringes. It could welcome new organisations and currents to become an organic part of the collective whole. There could be hubs around hubs, with a host of overlapping connections and networks – regional, social, political – all feeding into wider networks of collective struggle and resistance, exchanging contacts, information and ideas, becoming networks of solidarity and empowerment.

Ultimately the hub needs to be accessible to ordinary working class people on every level, physically, electronically, ideologically and practically. It exists to reflect and aid resistance.

## A hub – what does it do?

There are several layers of possibility for the hub in terms of a web-based portal. But it's important that this isn't just another internet activist portal, not just a series of websites or virtual networks. It would have to be a real network of mutual aid and collective coordina-

tion, a process that's built on real coordination between groups, individuals, currents and movements, a genuine collective effort. This would need considerable commitment of energy, resources and time, and a level of input from participants that many revolutionaries are not used to. What we could create, by working together, would be an interesting and useful resource that could help to spread ideas and resistance, but it would take a lot of effort. It's an idea filled with potential. We need to develop this, because it won't happen by itself.

In terms of a website or series of websites, there would need to be input on at least three levels:

- PASSIVE: resource bank – archives/libraries/information
- ACTIVE: constantly updated news/coordination/updates/innovation
- ROLLING: programmes of analysis/comment/discussion/development

None of this is going to emerge overnight. It's vital that the information is open to access by all (which will generate security issues), and that the content isn't the responsibility of a select few. Participation must be open, not just by default, but by active solicitation and encouragement. Without participation, there's no hub. Input should be diverse and localised, as well as specific and global. What it can't be is centralised.

The hub should be able to draw in overlapping projects and developments for mutual reinforcement and benefit. There are

(continued on page 8)



## What we say ...

It's hard to believe, but Tony Blair was once dubbed 'Bambi' by elements of the mainstream press. Nowadays, after six years in power, he resembles nobody so much as the appalling Baroness Thatcher, one of his less than illustrious predecessors.

It's a resemblance that goes far beyond his looks. His politics too have been primarily concerned with extending her legacy. Current figures show that the gap between rich and poor in Britain is higher than at any time in the last thirteen years.

Poverty levels under New Labour exceed those celebrated by the Iron Lady, back in the 1980s. What economists call the 'Gini coefficient', an international measure of inequality, has increased from an average of 29 points under Thatcher to a whopping 35 points under Teflon.

But it's still early days. After all, inequality was relatively static in the early Tory years but soared in the late 1980s. Ironically, it declined slightly after Thatcher was kicked out and began to rise again in 1995. This rise has continued under the Labour government.

The latest statistics show that inequality in Blair's Britain is, on average, a sixth higher than the equivalent average during the eleven years of Thatcher's reign, and 10% higher than during the Conservatives' whole eighteen years in office.

This should serve as a wake-up call for those who think political action is the way to combat inequality. If we want to stop the rich from getting richer, we have to organise ourselves for collective direct action on two fronts.

First, we have to reduce exploitation at work so that we give less of our labour unpaid for the bosses to live off. Then we have to force the state to change its priorities.

Rather than letting it spend tax (our money) on war, bureaucracy, business subsidies, the Royals and other waste, we must pressurise it to focus on real, human needs.

And as the fate of the Labour Party shows, any movement that's going to do this would have to be extra-parliamentary to be effective.

But this is only the first step. Ultimately we have to build a movement that can get to the real root of the problem – capital and its protector, the state. We can't fall into the trap of setting up the welfare state in preference to the warfare one.

Both, like the capitalist system them maintain, have to go in order for us to achieve our goal, which is human freedom.

### Next issue

The next issue will be dated 12th July, and the deadline for copy will be 3rd July. Contributions can be sent to [FreedomCopy@aol.com](mailto:FreedomCopy@aol.com)

### Donations: 8th to 21st June

AD, Dorset, £1; AF, Glasgow, £5; CW, Swindon, £6.05; GH, London N1, £6; JL, Wolverhampton, £15; JTC, Glasgow, £25; RB, Aldworth, £6; TK, Glasgow, £6; TN, Camberley, £1.12.

### Retirement

Charles Crute, a previous editor of this newspaper and longstanding Freedom worker, left recently after seventeen years toil in Angel Alley. We wish him well for the future.

### Anarchist press

There's a meeting in the Autonomy Club at 7.30pm on Tuesday 1st July, co-hosted by Freedom and Black Flag. This will continue the discussion about the direction of the British anarchist press and other media. Members of all anarchist federations and none are warmly invited. The Autonomy Club is Freedom's new social centre, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## Readers' views

### More on Mayday

I don't mind being criticised for views I hold, which is fair enough. But I do object to being criticised for opinions I don't have. Sadly that's exactly what Ricky Elmbourne does ('Mayday reconsidered', 31st May). He claims my original article revealed my "illusions in the trade unions." I said they were bureaucratic and sectional, and squander working class economic power. Is that an illusion? Are they really direct-actionist, self-managed and organised industrially?

No, so I'm not sure what the 'illusions' he talks about could be. He says I 'equate' the working class with the trade unions. I re-read my article and couldn't see where I said this. What I certainly said was that "many workers see them as irrelevant." But why let facts get in the way, Ricky? The key issue is exposed when he says I see trade unions as "potential – if not actual – sites of class struggle." He tells us we "need to go beyond the trade union form." Sadly Ricky doesn't explain how to do that.

While sounding very revolutionary, ultra-leftist positions like this seem to be translated into, well, less than revolutionary practice. Last time I noticed, Britain wasn't awash with strikes. Looking at my own workplace, the only people who are actually involved in collective class struggle are union members. The rest are happy to cross picket lines – does this mean they're so revolutionary they reject "the trade union form" and struggles for minor changes?

I never said that Colombian trade union leaders were being assassinated because they were revolutionary. I suggested that they were considered a threat to the status quo, the power of bosses over their workers. Ricky rejects this by saying "it simply shows the general level of repression in Colombia." So it's just a coincidence that trade unionists are being murdered? I doubt it, which shows how far from reality certain 'revolutionary' positions in practice are.

Ultimately, I agree with Ricky. We do need to go beyond trade unionism. I don't think that trade unions can be revolutionary, but we need to look at the world as it is, not as we wish it to be. We don't live in 1919 Germany, nor even Britain in the 1970s. We live in a country where levels of industrial action are tiny. It's a question of how to get our ideas across to rebel workers, how anarchists relate to their fellow trade unionists in order to be in a position to go "beyond the trade union form" into strike assemblies, workers' councils and, finally, revolution. In my article, I suggested rank-and-file groups as a means to this end. Ricky suggests, well, nothing beyond revolutionary rhetoric.

This is why I made the choice of going to the 'reformist' trade union march in London, rather than the 'revolutionary' Mayday event. Rather than preach to the converted, I wanted to take the anarchist message to people who may not know it and who could find its ideas of direct action, solidarity and self-management of relevance in their own struggles.

And that's why I suggested going *en masse* to next year's union march, with a conference afterwards to discuss the application of anarchist ideas. In 2004 it will be on Saturday and it may well attract more than the 'usual suspects'. I may be wrong. It may be the same sorry crowd of trade union bureaucrats, trots and Stalinists. But, then again, when I suggested a co-ordinated anarchist presence on the 15th of February anti-war march I was dismissed by a contributor to Freedom who said it would just be usual pacifists, trots and CNDers.

There were over a million people.

That's just one suggestion, which we can discuss at the Anarchist Bookfair in October. I know my suggestion doesn't sound very 'revolutionary'. But we're at the start of a realignment in the anarchist movement and we need to think how we can constructively apply our ideas in circumstances that are less than perfect. To use an analogy, there's little point telling a baby to run when it's only just learning how to crawl.

Iain McKay

The two letters attacking Iain McKay's report of the TUC Mayday march struck me as a little harsh. Iain's from Glasgow, where the annual march isn't made up of Turkish Stalinists and union full-timers. And in my reading of his report, I took it he was attacking the lack of militancy in groups like Globalise Resistance and Revo, who jumped at the chance to go on a 'legal' demo and not have those nasty anarchists stealing all the headlines. After all, better to have no news than news from nowhere.

Martin H.

Both letters pointed out, validly, that Iain should have expected the trade union event to be as tedious as it is every year. But I'd like to ask, what's so revolutionary about the alternative? Spending the day closely followed and surrounded by police in order to smash a few windows may appeal to some anarchists' self-image, but it's ultimately just as tedious and futile as anything the TUC can provide.

The main problem with Mayday in London is that it's essentially abstract. It's simply a date in the calendar, not part of any genuine struggle, so whatever takes place can only be in the form of gestures. The attempt to break out from the conformism of the TUC march in the last few years has only led to the situation where the police are prepared, the mainstream media have already written the story and the results dwindle, year on year.

Capitalism is a social relationship, and can only be changed by a revolutionary movement in our workplaces and communities. Our day-to-day struggles may seem less sexy than a good ruck, but in the end they have more chance of changing the society we live in. My message would be: forget Mayday.

Steve Fisher

Beltane is an ancient fertility ritual to mark the start of summer. As the old order crumbles, it must constantly find more and more sacrificial offerings to capital and the gods of profit. It's obviously far easier to smash up fast-food chains at night when there's no-one around but, unlike other days, shutting up the authorities is easy on Mayday, when they're eager to offer themselves as the defenders of patriarchy and rape. The marked absence of fluffiness in this year's overtly militant *Weapons of Mass Construction* literature helped this process. The Disneyland Terrorist feel was enough to scare the cops into domination (although the text wasn't too extreme, the graphics and red and black colours were enough). On the day, all that was required was to turn up and go through the motions.

Evol

### Anarchism vs violence

Of several depressing pieces in the last issue of Freedom, I found the one by "a member of the black bloc" the most clearly lacking in reason ('What was their role?', 14th June). It's true that "the biggest demonstrations"

won't normally produce immediate practical effect "if they just voice dissent". But Blair's contempt for the huge London march of 15th February has done immense damage to the British public's trust in him, and that's a start, if only a little one. This effect would have been entirely lost if the media had been able to portray the demonstration as being dominated by the "smashing and burning" that the writer thinks is "as important as the music and colour created by ... carnival."

He (she?) says his "experience has shown that police repression and state violence isn't a response to violent demonstrations, but to effective ones." In the context of the Evian G8 meeting, "effective" can have one of only two meanings. It either means that the demonstrations prevented the summit from being held and made the heads of state think again, which they didn't, or it means they converted some people to anarchist ideas. This too they plainly failed to do.

The protests may have convinced some frustrated young people that they've become anarchists, because they feel they've been given licence to break windows and trash properties by the backing of a political "ism". So they'll join the ranks of those who continue to persuade the public that anarchism is synonymous with mindless violence. But state-based capitalism will survive until millions of people are persuaded by argument and example that there's a better and more decent alternative.

Amorey Gethin

### De Sade takes da rap

Odessa Steps says that appointing Paul Bremer governor of Iraq is "rather like making the Marquis de Sade head of Amnesty International" ('American imperialism unleashed', 14th June). I object to this unthinking slur on de Sade, as would anyone who knows about Sade's character in real life and his role in the French Revolution. Sade would be admirable as head of Amnesty, as he was opposed to all state brutality and even saved the life of his own worst enemy, his mother-in-law, who'd been responsible for his thirteen-year imprisonment under the *ancien regime*.

During the Revolution, it was Sade who reformed the hospitals and forced the authorities to implement sanitary conditions. He also opposed the death penalty in numerous writings and was condemned because of his refusal to approve the bloodthirsty measures of the Jacobins, the Stalinists of his day. Odessa Steps should find a more suitable comparison. Sade is maligned enough as it is.

Anthony Walker

### Answers to Anarcho-quiz (back page)

1. There was fierce repression in Spain at the time and the CNT was unable to send delegates to the founding congress.
2. Trotsky's. The article notes the influence former Trotskyists have had on Bush's Middle East strategy. They include neo-conservatives like Steven Schwartz, the Iraqi-American Kanan Makiya and British journalist Christopher Hitchens, all of whom were once Trots. Does this put the antics of the SWP in the Stop The War Coalition in a different light?
3. It wasn't from Australia, but 1850s Texas. Yes, the Texan reputation for impartial justice stretches back that far. Quite why it was so-called nobody knows.
4. William Godwin. Malthus was trying to 'prove' that poverty was the fault of the poor, so justifying the hierarchy and oppression Godwin was attacking.



# The classic text of the Council Communists



## Workers' Councils

by Anton Pannekoek

with an introduction by Noam Chomsky  
AK Press, £9.00

Anton Pannekoek was the main theorist of workers' council communism. He fought for revolutionary socialism but rejected Lenin's party domination in post-revolutionary Russia. His ideas and movement were isolated and nearly forgotten for decades, but they're now seen as relevant again by many. Such is the neglect and misrepresentation attached to him, however, that it's necessary to look at the background to his politics before examining the details.

Along with his lifelong associate, fellow Dutchman Herman Gorter (pronounced Hörter), Pannekoek was active before the First World War and became one of the best-known international socialists. Both men argued with the leaders of the Labour Party in Holland and later of its German equivalent, the SPD. They supported the action of Russian workers in 1917.

When the Bolsheviks assumed dictatorial power in the new 'workers' state' and ordered revolutionary movements elsewhere to accept Lenin's rule, there was a massive revolt in Germany. Believing that power should lie with the workers' own councils, the rebels – now expelled from the German Communist Party – formed their own political grouping, the German Workers Union (later the KAPD). This assisted but didn't dominate the workers' movement. A similar formation soon grew up in other European countries.

Significantly, this meant the movement rejected party-dominated Bolshevism, instead adopting features of anarcho-syndicalism. It gave priority to workers' councils and a national structure for them. It allowed workers to build their own unions and oppose traditional ones. It meant rejection of parliamentary elections in favour of direct workers' representation. It led to efforts towards a revolution based on collective principles.

Subsequently the movement opposed both the traditional right and the communists. The German CP was large, but the workers' councilists kept up their politics and practice, running their own unions and an armed workers' militia in the Ruhr and providing a home for the genuine revolutionaries thrown out by the Communist Party.

In the 1920s and 1930s, three forms of capitalism – military, state and conventional – began a conflict which included armed and economic warfare. The oppositional movement of Pannekoek and Gorter was all but eliminated, surviving as a small grouping in countries such as Holland, where the main activists retreated to.

Yet workers' councils have been formed ever since during times of resistance, in countries

large and small, industrialised and agrarian. If Pannekoek's ideas for turning revolt into socialism had been followed, much life and blood would have been spared.

But he was doomed to work on in adverse circumstances, including the Nazi invasion of Holland, writing for posterity. *Workers' Councils* was published in 1946 and translated into English (by Pannekoek himself) for an Australian publication. It's only been available in partial reprints ever since. The result of many decades of experience, it's by far the best book on the subject despite some astonishing omissions.

The first part, entitled 'The task', is a concise introduction to Marxist socialism, though this isn't explicitly acknowledged. The nature of class struggle is examined in the next part, 'The fight'. The third part, 'The foe', is an excellent survey of the existing political economies of the main industrial countries at the time, parliamentary 'democracy' and fascism. The Second World War is looked at in the fourth section, and the perspectives of 1946 are considered in the fifth. For me, the first two sections are more interesting, the rest being historical material.

'The task' begins with a useful summary of capitalist production. It's been criticised because it seems to suggest that over-production of commodities (which remain unsold due to workers' limited purchasing capacity) is the crucial weakness of capitalism, not the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, as Marx believed.

In the rest of this section, Pannekoek develops a theory of the state which sits between conventional Marxism and anarchism. This may upset more readers than it pleases, but it's consistent with his politics. He explores collective workshop organisation, the establishment of shop stewards' committees and their progression towards workers' councils. He doesn't give sufficient attention to the details of workers' administration above the workplaces, but he's not alone in this.

On the subject of a reconstructed socialist order, he predicts the operation of a management control system based on book-keeping, computing and accounting. This would, he suggests, locate itself within the council structure and perform essential servicing functions – which is how subsequent writers have also seen workers' control operating. Interestingly, Pannekoek used the term 'computing' for this process, though he was writing in 1945.

He develops his critique of reformism and the parliamentary orientation of the Labour movement, outlining his case against parliamentary 'democracy' and contrasting it with the real, direct democracy of the councils. This is also expanded on later in the book. On capitalist psychological dominance, he expounds his ideas about

hegemony, devoting a page or two to capitalist use (or rather misuse) of myths about human nature.

He's scathing about intellectuals, saying they possess, not superior intelligence, but a capacity for dealing with abstractions and formulae. He accuses them of learning by rote, of being narrow specialists with little knowledge of important areas of life. He contrasts this with the immense creativity of humanity, reflecting Antonio Gramsci's idea that everyone's a philosopher.

Curiously, he's silent about the actual practice of workers' councils, the political movement and the Russian experience of 1917. The developments in the German and Dutch councils and their related political parties were probably painful for him, and it's possible that the circumstances he was writing in were restrictive – the recent execution of workers' leaders by the Nazis was probably fresh in his mind. But the exclusion of the recent political past, especially with his comprehensive knowledge of it, remains inexcusable.

The next part of the book, 'The fight', does look at the historical experience. Pannekoek examines the class struggles of the new era in detail. Defining direct action as that undertaken by workers without mediation by trade union officials, he looks at workplace organisation and committees, and reviews various forms of strike – unofficial or wildcat, occupations, sit-ins, political and general.

On political strikes he mentions that of the British Chartists in 1842, but describes more fully the Belgian General Strike of 1893, aimed at securing the right to vote. Moving on to the Russian strike movement and the soviets of 1905, he describes the effect of mass action throughout Europe. Finally he moves on to the events of 1917, the year he calls a "bright star". The worldwide significance of the revolution is described, but strangely there are no details of the repression of workers' councils. He mentions the gradual erosion in the power of the soviets, but this process – which should be his strongest point – is underplayed.

He then jumps straight into his critique without having a serious look at Leninism, another mistake. Even in his description of the Bolshevik regime he's unclear. He describes it both as 'state socialism' and 'state capitalism', a confusing situation. He says nothing about the opposition to Lenin, either from the workers' councils or, later, from the Workers' Opposition.

The degeneration under Stalin and resistance from Trotsky's Left Opposition is similarly ignored. As with the neglect of the political action of the German council communists, these omissions severely weaken the force of his argument. Many workers and political activists would have known about these

recent events when the book was published, and by ignoring a potential point of contact Pannekoek wasted an opportunity.

He makes important points about the class struggle. He draws parallels between workers' action and conventional war, and claims that victory will come, not because of physical capacity or numerical strength, but from 'psychological' power. Revolution in the minds of workers is their strongest weapon, he suggests, and he elaborates at length on breaking capitalist hegemony.

The major weakness in this bit of his argument is the uncertainty about the role of political parties. He had direct experience of the dangers of party chauvinism from his time as a committed Leninist in 1917, but he also insisted that a political organisation would be needed in an advisory role, despite many in the movement who wanted to abandon it altogether. Exactly how to organise insurrection into a constructive form of course remains a subject of intense debate.

Another major criticism of 'The fight' is the brevity of Pannekoek's consideration of the Spanish workers' councils. These operated from 1936-38, under political leadership which came from anarcho-syndicalists rather than Marxists, and proved decisive institutions over vast areas of both agrarian and industrial Spain for over two years. Millions of Spanish workers proved imaginative, diligent, resourceful and revolutionary in this period, so Pannekoek seems guilty of selective thinking in not giving them more consideration.

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## A sideways look

Not long ago I visited Cliffe in Kent, not far from the Thames, one of the sites the government is considering for building an airport on. It would be a nonsense place to build one. It's already used as a major intercontinental hub by birds, lots of them. It's generally known that birds and aircraft engines don't mix, though if Prescott gets his way and concretes over north Kent, it might deter some of them from coming. The birds, that is.

Cliffe is also a nature reserve run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, who have another two reserves nearby. These sites are supposedly protected under law, but we can't go upsetting the airport lobby now, can we? The RSPB has said the proposal makes "a laughing stock of wildlife protection mechanisms". The government must have acted pretty stupidly if it's managed to upset a naturally cautious organisation like the RSPB into what is, for it, quite vigorous campaigning.

Of course, ministers never really intended to build an airport at Cliffe. It's the stalking horse of the airport expansion game. What the airline industry and the government really want is to expand existing provision at one or all of Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted – the existing three London airports – despite promises to communities in those places to rein in the perpetual growth and maybe let them get some sleep. (Or is sleep just for wimps? Thatcher famously got by on just four hours a night.)

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council recently knocked back an application from Southend Airport to expand by demolishing an ancient church. They also wanted to start international flights. The population of Southend is around 175,000 and, while I can appreciate that the charm of the seafront and pier might fade after a while, surely it doesn't need an international airport? Even if we take in Chelmsford and Basildon we can still only get up to just under half a million, which would seem to imply that Britain as a whole needs 120 international airports. Are they sure?

Perhaps they are. Travelling by car is becoming slower, trains are expensive and unreliable. Is air travel the answer? Okay, it pollutes far more than any other means, but if everyone has an airport on their doorstep, then we can all get places quicker. That's so long as you don't count the delays, check-in times and so on.

Why not go one step further, and turn the whole of the south east of England into an airport? That way, everyone would work in Heathrow Megasuperdooperational or whatever they'd call it and save all that time on travel. You'd just fly from Terminal 723, where you slept, to Terminal 88, where you worked. Presumably in something air-transport related. And it's all good for the economy, so it must be alright.

Svartfrosk



## Coordinating diversity

(continued from page 5)

many initiatives in progress (and in discussion) that may feed into the hub idea: IT workshops, web portals, collective organisation work-shops, community projects, consensus training, grassroots publishing projects, rank and file networks, revolutionary conferences, even other hubs. The hub isn't a particularly original idea, but we don't need to keep re-inventing the wheel – we need to build on what's gone before and on parallel initiatives, and move forward together.

### A hub – how does it work?

Ideally there should be no freestanding organisation (and no way for membership ideas to function), so the hub should be purely the sum of its parts, with collective input, organisation and control. It would exist only in the collaboration between participants, in the network of practical and political support between us and in the process of our collective effort. The flipside of this is that everyone understands that the hub belongs to them and that it's their responsibility to sort things out (rather than presuming someone else will). We need to learn to be collective and to act collectively.

Rather than try to force everyone into some kind of rigid ideological straitjacket (which would lead to horrible failure, even if it was remotely desirable) we need to accept difference explicitly – difference of priorities, focus, membership and agenda. If we can't accept this, we can't even start to move forward. The hub can't be a process of

uniformity. The participants need to be able to act autonomously within the collective and that autonomy needs to be respected. We need a simple framework of core ideas and mechanisms that we can use to work together, describing our motivation and our organisational principles. There are already useful frameworks in existence, like that used by Peoples' Global Action (PGA). We wouldn't have to start from scratch.

We can use whatever forms of coordination we choose: delegate meetings, conference calls, bulletin boards, email lists, regional meetings, conferences, whatever works best. It's the decision to begin the process which is most important, the form will emerge within our collective will. Whatever we decide now may not be useful in six months, so we need the creativity to be flexible and dynamic, to look in new directions as well as taking what we need from the past.

The technology used for the hub raises many questions. The form it takes needs to reflect how it will be used and how to keep it open and accessible. Technology isn't neutral, and the use of computer systems will always raise issues. Like every other aspect of capital, we can use it the way the bosses want us to or we can use it against them. Every tool is a weapon if you use it right.

J.B. and E.B.

The authors welcome comments (either positive or negative, as long as they're constructive). You can participate in the discussion about this project by emailing [mail@hub.org.uk](mailto:mail@hub.org.uk) or by posting a comment to the discussion board at the hub website, <http://www.hub.org.uk>.

## Council Communists

(continued from page 7)

One final point of criticism concerns his use of the vague word 'spiritual', even allowing for his erratic English and his insistence on writing the translation himself. What's actually needed is something covering political confidence, cultural ascendancy and maybe psychological independence, but one word for all this is hard to find. The struggle to eliminate capitalist hegemony is difficult enough, without unclear definitions to start with.

Pannekoek's main contribution was his work on the politics of workers' councils, but he also made a series of general theoretical contributions. His classification of the communists as reformists and of Russia as state capitalist came at a time when many still had illusions about that regime. He promoted and expanded on the value of rank-and-file action in the unions while communists and their supporters were busy with broad lefts. He prefigured the idea of computing as the form of administration in a reconstructed society, and he was prophetic about national liberation in Asia.

All of this is contained in *Workers' Councils*. It deserves to be read by anyone who wants to understand the committees that accompany almost every revolt against capitalism. Readers may not agree with everything Pannekoek writes, but his book remains indispensable for understanding and guiding action.

Alan Woodward

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## Anarcho-quiz

- Why didn't the CNT join the anarcho-sindicalist International Workingmen's Association when it was founded in 1922?
- According to a recent article in Canada's *National Post*, whose ghost is wandering the White House?
- Where did the term 'kangaroo court', meaning an unofficial trial, originate?
- When Thomas Malthus came up with his ideas on control of the population, which anarchist writer was he responding to?

For answers see page 6